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5 December 1983

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Information Services

FROM:

[redacted]
Chief, Classification Review Division

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SUBJECT: Some Comments on the Systematic
Classification Review of OSS RecordsREFERENCE: DO/IMS Memo 83-556, dated 9 November 1983
titled, "Transfer of OSS Records to the
National Archives"

1. Reference discusses some aspects of the systematic classification review of the OSS records. By concentrating on a few aspects of that project, it can be read in a way that creates false impressions and raises some questions. To fill in some of the missing pieces and present the record as it was experienced in CRD, the following brief story of what was known as the [redacted] project is offered: The OSS review team was first organized in the Summer and Fall of 1972 to systematically review the classification of OSS records held at NARS. This was required by E.O. 11652. The records at NARS were the OSS Research and Analysis (R&A) files that were given to the Department of State on the dissolution of OSS on 1 October 1945 and later accessioned to NARS. The original OSS Review Team consisted of four CIA annuitants who formerly served in or worked with OSS and who were hired under contract to conduct this review. They completed the review of the R&A files at NARS and then were brought into Headquarters to review the OSS records held by CIA as the successor organization to the OSS.

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2. The team was expanded to 15 members, all CIA annuitants with long years of DO experience. In 1978 it was agreed with NARS to have one of their archivists, Colonel Raymond Tagge, survey the 6,500 feet of OSS records held by CIA to determine which were of permanent value. This project was carried out over several months in coordination with DO/IMS and DA/RMD. The result was that Colonel Tagge, in consultation with CIA officers, selected about 3,300 feet of OSS records as being of permanent value. Then with the Carter Administration, a new Executive Order was issued, E.O. 12065. It also required systematic classification

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SUBJECT: Systematic Classification Review of OSS Records

review of permanent records and slightly changed the definition for what was classifiable. By 1979, the determination of which OSS records were permanent was well under way, and with E.O. 12065 becoming effective in December 1978, it was proposed that the OSS Team begin the review of what was eventually to become 3,300 feet of permanent OSS records. That program began in January 1979 and was completed (except for part of one job, number 56-20) by the end of September 1982. Review guidelines were developed with the active participation of [] they were put in writing, and discussed in lively sessions with the Team members. Procedures also were coordinated with [] which was responsible for sending the OSS material to the Team, and then processing it after the Team had conducted their classification review. A procedure was developed to withdraw material that remained classified, place it in a separate archives job, and record that action in the DARE computer system which also was used by CRD in its systematic classification review program of CIA records.

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3. In summary, the OSS permanent records were reviewed by one group of very experienced former CIA officers, under E.O. 12065 and a single set of guidelines developed as the review progressed, and during the time period January 1979 to September 1982. In this kind of an effort, which involves many individual subjective judgements, there is a rather broad range for possible disagreement. I would hope that when the [] project is examined, it is done so on the basis of the complete record and under the guidelines within which it operated.

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9 NOV 1983

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Operations

FROM: John F. Pereira
Chief, Information Management Staff

SUBJECT: Transfer of OSS Records to the National Archives

1. This is a request for your approval to advise the CIA Historian, Dr. J. Kenneth MacDonald that this Directorate is agreed to the transfer of the declassified OSS records to the National Archives (NARS) for eventual release to the public.

2. Background: At the request of the DCI, Dr. J. Kenneth MacDonald is preparing recommendations for the final disposition of OSS records. In that context, he met with us and asked that we consider the transfer of those records to NARS. After having studied his proposal, we are recommending the transfer to NARS of the declassified portion of those OSS records which NARS has appraised as being of historical value (see attached schedule). These holdings consist of approximately 3,500 cubic feet of material. A review of them, which began in 1972 and which was completed last year, resulted in the declassification of approximately 93% of the documents.

3. In December 1979, we transferred to NARS an initial offering of 198 cubic feet of the declassified OSS records, including the OSS ETO War Diaries. None of this material has as yet been released to the public because of Agency restrictions. We now propose to lift those restrictions with the condition that foreign government information must continue to be protected, and could not be released without prior approval of the governments involved.

4. Problem: The question whether the declassified OSS records should be transferred to NARS without further review was given considerable study. The ten year long declassification of OSS records was conducted under various Executive Orders with differing guidelines for declassification. Also, the reviewers may not have taken into full consideration certain politically sensitive areas that might still be damaging to the national security and U.S. foreign relations. We, therefore, concluded that we make a final check of the OSS material not yet transferred to NARS to ensure the protection of all such sensitive materials.

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In our final check of those records we would be concerned in particular with records relating to Great Britain, whose activities were so closely intertwined with many OSS operations.

5. The Proposal: Our recommendation, therefore, is to advise Dr. MacDonald that he may indicate in his report to the DCI that the DO has agreed to transfer the declassified OSS records to NARS in stages, beginning with the least sensitive files. Prior to the transfer of any records, we would make a final check to ensure that any sensitive material is protected. This would consist of an inspection of each box of records to check that material bearing on foreign liaison or other politically sensitive areas is protected. This could be accomplished in relatively short order as it would not require the time consuming and labor intensive process of document-by-document inspection which caused the initial review to take ten years.

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John F. Pereira

APPROVE:

W. Stein

Deputy Director for Operations

16 NOV 1983

Date

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